

Interagency Ecological Program Lead Scientist's Report

Summary: This report highlights three items: 1) the formation of three new IEP work teams, 2) upcoming conferences, and 3) the Draft Plan for "Adaptive Management of Fall Outflow for Delta Smelt Protection and Water Supply Reliability."

IEP Work Teams

The mission of the Interagency Ecological Program (IEP) is, in collaboration with others, to provide ecological information and scientific leadership for use in management of the San Francisco Estuary, which includes the Delta. One of the most effective tools for interagency science cooperation and collaboration with others (e.g. universities, NGOs, private entities) has been the formation of Project Work Teams (PWTs) that focus on specific research and monitoring topics of interest to policy makers, managers, scientists, and the public. IEP PWTs are open to all who want to participate. In general, the goals of the PWTs include promoting scientific information exchange and collaboration, organizing new studies, reviewing study proposals, plans, and reports, and conducting integrated analyses and syntheses of IEP data sets. This year, the IEP has formed three new PWTs focused upon:

- New studies related to restoration activities in the Yolo Bypass (chair: Ted Sommer, DWR);
- Migratory fish telemetry research and monitoring in the Central Valley (co-chairs: Pat Brandes, USFWS, and Cynthia LeDoux-Bloom, DWR); and
- Salmon and steelhead genetic research and monitoring in the Central Valley (chair: Josh Israel, Reclamation).

More information about these and other IEP PWTs is available at <http://www.water.ca.gov/iep/docs/IEP-ORG.pdf>.

Upcoming Conferences

IEP scientists helped organize and are participating in the American Fisheries Society 141st Annual Meeting to be held in Seattle, Washington, on September 4 – 8, 2011. The theme of the conference is "New Frontiers in Fisheries Management and Ecology: Leading the Way in a Changing World." The full conference program can be found at <http://afs2011.org/program/>. On Tuesday, September 6, the IEP is sponsoring a special symposium at this conference on the "San Francisco Estuary: A Dynamic Confluence of Fisheries, Policy, and Resource Management," see <http://afs.confex.com/afs/2011/webprogram/Session1618.html>. IEP scientists are also participating in the 10th biennial State of the San Francisco Estuary Conference in Oakland on September 20 and 21, 2011 (see Delta Lead Scientist's report).

Draft Plan for "Adaptive Management of Fall Outflow for Delta Smelt Protection and Water Supply Reliability"

Component 3 of the Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) in the 2008 Biological Opinion on the effects of water project operations on delta smelt requires higher Fall Delta outflows in above-normal and wet years such as 2011. This "Fall Outflow action" (also known as the "Fall X2 action") is intended to improve habitat suitability and contribute to higher average delta smelt abundances. It is a major ecosystem manipulation with broad ecosystem and water supply implications and is currently being challenged in court.

Component 3 of the RPA expressly requires that the Fall Outflow action be adaptively managed to ensure its effectiveness for delta smelt protection while also protecting freshwater supplies. New scientific information developed during implementation may, as circumstances warrant, lead to changes to the action itself.

In July 2011, an independent review panel formed by the Delta Science Program released its review of a Draft Plan for Adaptive Management of Fall Outflow for Delta Smelt Protection and Water Supply Reliability presented by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). Since then, Reclamation scientists with help from other IEP scientists have been working to revise the Draft Plan in response to the panel's recommendations and solidify the science components of the plan for use in the fall of 2011. Because of the broad interest in this action and its complexity, Reclamation requested that the implementation of the scientific studies and monitoring associated with the Adaptive Management Plan be managed and carried out by the IEP. The IEP has established expertise in long-term Delta ecosystem monitoring and investigation, including the Pelagic Organism Decline studies. The IEP also provides a means of assuring that the implementation of the Adaptive Management Plan can be effectively managed by agency policymakers. The revised Draft Plan will be used as the basis for scientific studies beginning in September.

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